

# Academy Consultation

## Frequently Asked Questions



### 1. Academy Basics

#### 1.1 What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that are not managed by a local authority but their funding and accountability is directly with the DfE (Department for Education).

#### 1.2 Why is the school proposing to become an Academy?

Under Section 4 of the Academies Act 2010, the Secretary of State for Education must make an academy order in respect of a maintained school if it has been judged to be 'Inadequate' by Ofsted. The school does not have a choice in this matter and an academy order has been raised.

Academies take with them a portion of the money held by the Local Authority to run central support services to schools.

We believe the advantages of being an Academy include:

- Freedom to develop the curriculum for our particular children
- As an Academy we will have greater financial control
- Greater freedom to address school priorities
- Central resource base – shared resource pools allow easier forward planning and unexpected short term demands can be met more easily
- Enhanced procurement – with a number of school procuring services or goods together, this increases the purchasing power of the Trust
- Access to money to improve state of buildings

### 2. Conversation and consultation

#### 2.1 What is the Edith Stein Multi Academy Trust (ESCAT)?

The ESCAT works as the overall body responsible for the schools within the Trust. Under the Trust sits the Local Governing Bodies for each individual school in the trust, not dissimilar to the current arrangement. The Governing Body will, alongside the Headteacher, continue to be responsible for the budget and performance of the school.

#### 2.2 Has the decision to convert to an Academy already been made?

Under the law, we have to become an Academy. However your views are important and they will help the Governors fashion the shape of the relationship with the Multi Academy Trust.

#### 2.3 When will the school become an Academy?

We would expect that the process will be completed by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. The Trust will undertake a process of Due Diligence before accepting Corpus Christi.

#### 2.4 Why is there a consultation?

The Academies Act 2010 requires the school to consult "such persons as they think appropriate" on whether the school should become an Academy. Irrespective of the legal duty, the Governors of the school would not wish to take such a significant decision without understanding your views.

#### 2.5 Who will be consulted

Parents are the key stakeholder group. In addition information will be sent out to other maintained primary schools and all schools in the Catholic Partnership

## **2.6 Does the school need the agreement of the Diocese to become an Academy?**

Yes. The Diocese are in full agreement with the proposals.

## **3. The Local Authority**

### **3.1 Does the school need agreement from the Local Authority to become an Academy?**

No. The Academies Act 2010 has removed the need for the Local Authority to approve plans for the school to become an Academy. Having said this, Portsmouth City Council are working closely with the school to ensure a smooth transition. We are grateful to the support we are providing.

### **3.2 What form of relationship will exist between the Local Authority and the school?**

This is for individual academies to determine. However, Portsmouth retains statutory duties for aspects of Special Educational Needs, Admissions coordination and provision of home-to-school transport. Local Authorities are also expected to play a key strategic role locally in areas such as pupil place planning, Admissions and sharing good practice. We have very good relations with PCC and Corpus Christi will continue to work with them in a spirit of co-operation after conversion.

## **4. Staffing and governance**

### **4.1 Does the school have to hold consultation with staff?**

Under employment legislation, the school's Governing Body (as the current employer) will need to conduct a TUPE\* consultation with all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) and the relevant unions as part of the staff transfer process.

*\*TUPE = Transfer of Undertaking – Protection of Employment*

### **4.2 How does governance structure work?**

The Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust has a Board of Directors who are ultimately responsible for the work of the Trust and the Academies. However, they devolve as much responsibility as possible to the individual schools. The Board of Trustees oversees, with the Diocese, the appointing of the Governors on each school Governing Body. Governors currently appointed to Corpus Christi will remain in place.

### **4.3 Who becomes the employer?**

Currently in a Catholic school, the Local Governing Body are the employer not the Local Authority. On conversion the employer becomes the Trust.

## **5. Finance**

### **5.1 Will we get more money as an Academy?**

Academies receive the same amount of per-pupil funding as they would receive from the Local Authority as a maintained school, plus an additional 'Education Services Grant' to reflect funding held centrally by Local Authorities. The Government is clear that becoming an Academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. However, Academies do have greater freedom to decide how they use their entire budget.

## **5.2 Is an Academy like a business?**

No. A business makes profit for its shareholders. An Academy is a charitable trust which cannot make profit. However, Trustees have legal responsibilities not dissimilar to directors in business.

## **5.3 Who will pay for building maintenance and improvement?**

The school will be able to access Capital Improvement Fund grants. The Edith Stein Trust has been very successful in accessing this money for Oaklands Catholic School.

## **5.4 Can the school alter teachers' pay and conditions?**

The terms and conditions of staff are protected on transfer under by the TUPE regulations. Academies do have the freedom to vary terms and conditions from national ones but the Trust does not have any plans to do this.

## **6. Other**

### **6.1 Will the school change its name and uniform as some Academies have done?**

No. The school will not change its name or uniform after it becomes an Academy.

### **6.2 Are Academies subject to the same Ofsted, and in the case of Catholic Schools Section 48, inspections?**

Yes, schools converting to Academies will continue to be inspected in the normal way and the Catholic Diocese will continue to operate Section 48 inspections.

### **6.3 If the school becomes an Academy, who takes responsibility for the pension arrangements?**

Teachers working in an Academy fall within the scope of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), just as if they were employed in a Local Authority maintained school. Non-teaching staff at schools are able to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The Trusts will pay the same rate as at present under both schemes, subject to any nationally imposed regulations.

### **6.4 Will becoming an Academy affect our admissions arrangements?**

When a school becomes an Academy it also becomes an admissions authority, responsible for its own admission arrangements; Catholic schools already have this freedom.

### **6.5 Will Academies have to be a part of the annual coordinated admissions scheme? (Eg when the LA needs to find places for families relocating to the area etc)**

Yes. Academy Funding Agreements require them to be in local coordination. That means although the Academy will apply its own admission arrangements, the LA will send out offers of places. The Local Authority in Portsmouth also coordinates admissions for in-year applications.

Academies are also required through their Funding Agreements to participate in local fair access protocols which help to ensure that no child is without a school place.

## **6.6 How are the children affected?**

The children will not notice any immediate difference; they will be in the same uniform, in the same classrooms with the same teaching staff. We will continue to strive for an outstanding education for all our children. However, in time, the children may notice changes and improvements in the way that they learn which will result from greater training opportunities for staff and wider opportunities for children.

## **6.7 Does becoming an Academy change the relationship with other schools and the community?**

No, we are committed to being at the heart of our community, a local school for local children. We already have a strong relationship with the Edith Stein Catholic Partnership. We will continue to collaborate and share expertise with other schools outside of the proposed MAT and the wider community.

## **6.8 Would the term and holiday dates or the timings of the school day change?**

Academies, free schools and voluntary-aided schools are able to set their own term dates but are asked to set the same or similar dates in the interest of parents who may have children at different schools. We would continue to work closely with Portsmouth City Council.

## **7. Questions raised by Parents**

### **7.1 As a secondary school, what can Oakland's realistically provide in terms of support to a primary school?**

Oakland's will be able to support Corpus Christi to broker support from advisors and other external sources. They will also provide direct support to embed efficient structures and systems. The shared services will also lead to some financial savings that can then be passed onto improving provision and outcomes for children.

### **7.2 Were other academy trusts outside the faith sector considered or could be better suited to support Corpus Christi?**

As the school is a Catholic school, the only solution in terms of identifying a suitable academy sponsor needed to come from the Catholic sector. There is an agreement in place with the DfE that this is how our Catholic schools will be supported.

In terms of identifying the correct support to improve the education offered to the pupils, the school will work with the best advisors, which may come from outside the Catholic sector.

### **7.3 How many Catholic academies are there?**

There are eight Catholic Academies in the Diocese.

### **7.4 Once Corpus Christi and Oakland's are linked, will this have any implied impact on the admissions policy for Oaklands?**

Oaklands Admission Policy already includes within its criteria a recognition to offer preference to children attending Catholic Primary Schools. No specific primary school is mentioned by name, oversubscription is prioritised by distance.